(c) In the Finance Bill for 1997-98, a Voluntary disclosure scheme has been announced to channelise black money held in India or abroad for productive purposes. It is proposed that 77.5% will go to State Governments and balance towards financing the Basic Minimum service Programme and infrastructure needs.

Steps to Reduce External Debt

2481. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether India's external debt is still very high as per international standards and that debt service payments continue to make a sizeable claim on the country's foreign exchnge earnings;

(b) if so, the details there of for the last two years, till date alogwith names of the countries with total amount of debt/ annual payment to be made; and

(c) what steps Government have taken so far to reduce the cost of brrowing, minimising currency, interest risks and to bring debt to more manageable evels as a whole?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI M.P. VEERENDRA KUMAR): (a) and (b) The size of India's external debt is still high by international standards. However, in terms of major debt indicators India is regarded as moderately in debted country. As per the latest available estimates, the total foreign debt outstanding as on March 31, 1995 and March 31, 1996 were US $99.0 billion and US $92.2 billion respectively. The debt service payments (comprising principle and interest payments) during 1994-95 and 1995-96 were Us $ 10.9 billion and US $ 12.4 billion respectively.

The total foreign debt cannot be quantified by country of origin since there are components, e.g. multilateral debt which by definition are not bilateral. In addition, bond holdings have an investor profile spread across countries. They also change hands when they are traded at exchange.

(c) The main features of debt management strategy followed by the Government includes sustaining a high growth rate of exports, encouraging non-debt creating inflows and keeping them maturity structure as well as the total amount of commercial debt under control.

White Paper on Advantages/ Disadvantages of Economic Reforms

2482. SHRI RAM GOPAL YADAV: SHRI ISH DUTT YADAV:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to bring out a white paper on the advantages and disadvantages revealed during the last six years in respect of the new economic reforms; and

(b) if so, whether there is any unit in the Finance Ministry to make a note of all criticism and suggestions in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI M.P. VEERENDRA KUMAR): (a) the economic survey 1996-97 which was laid on the table of the Parliament on February 25, 1997 provides a comprehensive review of the ongoing economic reforms and a detailed and balanced account of the current state of the Indian economy.

(b) Suggestions made by various individuals, associations and institutions are taken into consideration while formulating appropriate economic policies by the Government.

Financial Institutions on Islamic concept of Zero Interest

2483. SHRI K. RAHMAN KHAN: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that all over the world, a number of